

The house committee to investigate alleged haunts of Cadet Boos at West Point expects to begin its inquiry at West Point during the holidays.

The president, on the 10th, transmitted to congress extended reports on the agricultural resources of Porto Rico, with special reference to the establishment there of an agricultural experiment station.

Mr. Degoutin, the newly-elected commissioner from Porto Rico, made his appearance at the capitol, in Washington, on the 14th, for the first time, and was cordially welcomed by senators and representatives.

A rich land owner at Termini, near Palermo, Italy, has been kidnapped by brigands on his own property. His servants fled in dismay at the appearance of the band. Troops have been sent in pursuit of the brigands.

The late Robert Arlington, an eccentric gentleman of Leeds, England, who lived in a miserly manner in order to be able to devote his wealth to foreign missions, has left the London Missionary society over \$250,000.

Edward Lloyd, the well-known tenor, gave a farewell concert in London on the 12th. Mr. Lloyd's voice showed no diminution of power or quality; but he is tired of public life, and retires to engage in the raising of fancy cattle.

Another serious landslide has occurred in Heliohland. Thirty houses have been engulfed, and a considerable part of the island has been submerged. It has been impossible to send relief, and the losses have not yet been determined.

In presenting his report of the past four years of his administration, President Diaz says that Mexico's aim has been to develop public wealth, diffuse education, preserve peace, and, incidentally, to foster cordial relations with the United States.

The pension appropriation bill was completed, on the 13th, by the house sub-committee on appropriations having in charge, after a hearing from Commissioners of Pensions Evans. It carries about \$145,250,000, of which about \$144,000,000 is for pensions and the balance for administration.

The supreme court of Ohio, on the 11th, dismissed the proceedings brought by former Attorney-General Monett, charging that the Standard Oil Co. was in contempt of court for having failed to comply with an order, issued in 1892, directing a dissolution of the Standard Oil trust.

The Iowa state agricultural convention, at Des Moines, adopted resolutions, on the 12th, favoring the creation of a national park at the headwaters of the Mississippi river, and the concentration of the control of government forest reservations under the department of agriculture.

The vote of New York, as announced by the state board of canvassers, on the 12th, shows the following totals: For president—McKinley, republican, 821,992; Bryan, democrat, 678,386; Maloney, social labor, 12,622; Woolley, prohibition, 22,043; Debs, social democrat, 12,869. McKinley's plurality, 143,506.

The close of the exposition, throwing thousands out of employment, has created abnormal criminal conditions in Paris. Crime is rampant at all hours, especially in the suburbs. The officials of the prefecture of police calculate that 2,000 suffers from the exposition have joined the criminal army.

The report that the remains of 1,500 soldiers were brought home from the Philippines by the transport Hancock, is declared to be without foundation. The vessel brought only 11 corpses, ten being those of persons who died en route, and one which was transferred to the Hancock from the hospital ship Relief at Nagasaki.

Wheat is growing so rank in the Arkansas valley wheat belt, embracing territory that produced over forty million bushels last year, that the farmers are advertising to take stock free for the purpose of eating it down. The indications at this time for the crop are 25 per cent. more favorable than they were at the same time last year.

The Washington auxiliary to the National Red Cross association, on the 11th, sent \$1,000 to Mr. John Seely, chairman of the relief committee at Galveston, Tex., to be used in providing shelter for the homeless. Another thousand will be sent soon by the auxiliary, which is receiving contributions from all parts of the United States.

A young Indian near Grand Rapids, Lake Winnibegoshish, Man., recently shot a moose, almost entirely white, and considered by the Indians to be sacred. When the fact became known in his tribe, there was great commotion, and he was tried by a council of medicine men, and will have to undergo a series of punishments of a most cruel character, which may cause his death.

The will of the late Senator Cushman K. Davis, who died November 27, was filed for probate at St. Paul, Minn., on the 12th, by Mrs. Anna M. Davis, the widow. The will, which is very concise, and was made during the senator's last illness, leaves all his estate to Mrs. Davis, and names the St. Paul Trust Co. as executor. The estate is valued at \$25,000 in personal and \$40,000 in real property.

With imposing ceremonies, on the 12th, the national capitol celebrated the centennial anniversary of the founding of the seat of the federal government in Washington. The exercises combined a brilliant military parade, a review by the president from the east front of the capitol and orations in the hall of the house of representatives, with a reception at the Corcoran art gallery at night.

A Letter to Santa Claus.

Dear Santa Claus: We're two little boys in blue, An' we thought we'd write a letter, 'Fore Christmas comes, to you;

We live here with our parents, in a house 'at's painted green, An' of all the boys 'at ask for toys we're the best you ever seen!

"An' so, we thought we'd tell you jus' what to bring, 'cos we know 'at you have a heap to do, an' busy 'at as kin be!"

We know you're hitchin' up your team, an' purty soon you'll leave, An' the things in this all we want—these all on Chris-mus Eve:

"Two little drums, An' sugar plums, An' a slate 'at won't do any sums;

An' a Hobby Hoss You kin ride across, An' bicycles, an' balls to toss;

An' a steam-boat (Like the ones 'at float), An' a wagon hitched to a Billy Goat;

An' tops to spin (What they's music in), An' a cabin' monkey, dressed in tin;

An' two toy-guns (Like the Jones's ones), An' a railroad train 'at winds an' runs;

An' a sled 'at slides 'at's painted red, An' a bran'-new little trundle bed;

Horns, whistles, drums, An' sugar-plums, Bring all you've got when Chris'mus comes!

"We then thought that we'd tell you, 'cos you got so much to do, An' all the little boys an' girls is writin' you 'at's hitchin' up to leave;

We was 'fraid you might forget us, while you was hitchin' up to leave; But them things is thees all we want—these all on Chris-mus Eve!"

—Frank L. Stanton, in Atlanta Constitution.

MOTHER'S CHRISTMAS

I WAS very silly of me to faint," Mrs. Merrie said, tremulously, "and quite as silly for you all to send for a doctor! I never did such a thing in my life before! It just seemed like everything went, all on a sudden! I hadn't been real strong, some way, for a long time."

"No," Dr. Temple answered, quietly. "But I don't do to give up! What with the fruit season and harvest, thrashin' and the like, there's a sight to do. I don't see why I have this give down now—just at Christmas! It's too bad!"

"And may be worse," the physician replied, his keen glance resting on the sewing machine piled high with unfinished work. "Mrs. Merrie, if your friend over there fell to squeaking, grinding and snapping thread, should you go on working at full speed?"

"Why, that would be very smart in me, sir, to wear it out! I should stop and oil!"

"Thou sayst the thing I mean! Your old worn-out body bids you beware. I'm not going to give you any medicine. You need rest—absolute rest. I advise you to accept the good cheer of the season; leave home, and take a vacation."

Four solemn young faces turned blankly to the stern one of the man of science. Mother leave home! Jack and Joe, Jim and Jerry (diminutives of Jacqueline, Josephine, Jeannine and Jeremiah, the "Merry Jays") grasped the situation at once, and realized its hopelessness. It is all very well for a rich man to prescribe rest and change, but another matter to follow his advice when the purse is flabby and family cares crying with a voice which will not be comforted. A pitiable little smile drew down the corners of Mrs. Merrie's mouth.

"Oh, fix me out a little quinine, doctor, or salomon! You know I can't leave home! Christmas is here, and the poor children have been slaving away at their books and must have their good time. I'm all right."

Dr. Temple snatched the straps of his case and arose. "When you collapse again," he said, coldly, "you had better call another doctor—one who will give calomel."

Jerry, youngest of the Jays, had been standing remorsefully by her mother's chair. "I know what Dr. Temple thinks," she said, valiantly. "He thinks if you cannot rest with grown-up daughters—your case is hopeless, and he gives it up. You can follow the advice; she shall have her vacation, sir!"

"Spoken like a man!" the doctor answered, heartily. (Jerry wore her hair cut close, and walked and talked with a slight swagger.) "Take care of her; mothers are not a drug in the market. I will go now—good-bye, friends! I hope to see roses on those cheeks before the spring comes."

"What a very absurd man!" the mother exclaimed, dropping weakly back against the pillow. "Why did you send for him, girls?"

"Because," Jerry answered, rising to the height of self-accusation, "because we needed some one to tell us how selfish we are! In school, every one of us—not a soul to give you a hand's turn. And in vacation—oh, with a remorseful groan—"Last vacation I made crazy quilts!"

"And very pretty they were, too, I'm sure. What's the matter with you all? I ain't complainin'!"

"Of course not. But we're guilty all the same. She shall have her vacation—what do you say, girls?"

"Christmas or no Christmas!" was the verdict.

"Last summer," Jim remarked, gravely, "I went off to Cousin Vic's, and kept my hands white. It's ma's turn now."

"But ma ain't goin' to your Cousin Vic's," Mrs. Merrie announced, resolutely. "Ma's goin' to stay right here. I s'pose me a-akin' your poor pa for money!"

The word "money" brought a frown from four faces. "Well, we'll get supper and talk it over," Joe said, soberly. "You lie still and rest."

"Ma" was nothing loath. It was

very pleasant lying there in the twilight, watching the shadows clasp hands and dance along the rafters. Even the odor of camphor, suggestive of illness, did not trouble her. The room grew very quiet. She was a little girl again, out in her father's little hunting pond lilies, when Jim patted her hand.

"Here's your toast and tea, mother," she said, shaking her a little. "Take it now while it's hot. We've talked it all over with pa, and have decided about your vacation. You are to have one. We will take you off to-morrow." Luxurious idleness prevented argument.

"Well," she said, fumbling with the cup. "How white the lilies are! Well—yes."

Mrs. Merrie found herself helpless in the hands of husband and children. They would not let her prepare the morning meal, and it was a novel sensation to lie and listen to the cheerful sounds from the kitchen. Joe sang as she bustled about, and came in presently, an open valise in her hand.

"I'm packing your things, mother," she announced. "It's just awful to discover how few things you have to pack! Why didn't you remind us you need clothes sometimes? But Jim and I are cast in your mold; we've hunted you out some of our things. I'm going to give you my red merino wrapper to lounge in."

"Land sakes! I think you-all's gone stark starin' mad!" Mrs. Merrie protested petulantly. "You can't send me off against my will, I reckon! And where is there to go to—and money to pay for a trip, anyhow?"

Joe nodded brightly. "Never you mind, Mrs. Merrie; this is our little affair. We've arranged for the nicest boarding-place, where you can enjoy the first quiet Christmas of your married life. As to the money—well, your board is paid. Pa says you may stay as long as you want to."

"I reckon you-all will have your own way," the mother grumbled. "The money must come out of poor Jack's hard earnings, or your pa make a sacrifice. You might tell me where I'm going, anyhow! And I wonder if your royal highness and his majesty, Dr. Temple, and his grace, John Merrie, will let me take my knittin' along? 'Cause if you-all don't I shan't."

Joe smiled as she tucked Jesse's half-finished sock into the grip. "Oh, yes! you can take it. There won't be company, though; we want you to rest."

"And whatever is to become of the work—and the sewing—and my blessed baby—"

"Jesse is no baby—a great six-year-old boy! It's a pity, ma, if we can't take care of things! This is your medicine, and you shall take it, if we have to hold your nose! There now! I want to get you ready. Pa is bringing up the cart."

Mrs. Merrie submitted herself in resigned silence. There was a taint of affection in her resistance, for under all was a lurking sense of pleasure. Well, why not accept the rest and change? There come times in our lives when it is profitable to hide from our dearest.

Joe's soft touches on her head smoothed out the worry-wrinkles from a prematurely aged brow. By the time Mr. Merrie came in she could answer the twinkle in his eye. He was a good-humored giant, who, in sublime unconsciousness and with the best intentions in the world, had trodden on her heart for 20 years.

"Come on, old lady!" he said, shrugging into his overcoat. "We'll be off, and you and your faintin' spells in a jiffy! Wrap her up warm, girls; it ain't none too pleasant abroad. Not that mother's one of yer delicky carry-me-easy kind! Here's her thing-umbod. Now git through the kissin'!"

There were no tears, save those Mrs. Merrie softly let fall in weak self-pity. Was it really so easy to let her go? She looked back wistfully as she was driven off at a rattling pace, and saw the old house dissolve into the general gray. Nature had turned Quaker this day, and gray was the only color she wore. The fog hung low, dropping tears. Not a pleasant day, yet a sense of exhilaration came to her. It was a novel sensation to be driving thus, without so much as a chicken or a basket of eggs as an excuse. There was almost the spice of wickedness to make her ride memorable.

"There's old Markie's mill," John observed, checking the horse. "Old Markie he don't keep her up like he used to. She's a gittin' crazy lookin', the old mill is. If that was my place—"

He rambled on cheerfully. Mrs. Merrie scarcely heard. The dim landscape was like a picture seen in childhood—soft-shrouded, unreal, yet delightfully beautiful. She drew a short, sharp breath. "Why do we live so hard?" she faltered. "Look out! God has crowded His world with pleasant things!"

"Git' long, Poke-easy! D'ye reckon we're in such a rush to git we can't stop, and run on past?"

The ride was a long one. "We're

goin' to meet Christmas," John remarked, with a wink. "If she don't hump herself we'll be at headquarters afore she gits started!" But by and by visions of dinner and a fire-side appealed to him coaxingly, and he decided Christmas might find its way unattended. He put the horse into a trot, and after awhile the road grew familiar. Mrs. Merrie held her peace till they were fairly in the lane leading home.

"Have you forgotten anything?" she asked, dryly, suspecting a practical joke, and ready to resent it. John helped her down carefully and set her grip on the horse-block. "Not a bit of it!" he answered, heartily. "I started with the best little woman in the world, and have fetched back ever' bit of her! Here's yer boardin' house, missus, board paid in advance!"

The noise of their arrival brought four rosy young faces to the door. Jack (the oldest Jay) ran laughing to the gate, and kissed her mother on the cheek. "Our new boarder!" she said, taking the valise. "Come right in! I hope you will like us, and enjoy your vacation. These are my sisters, Josephine, Jeannine and Jeremiah. I'm Jack! Come in here and lay off your wraps. This is ma's room—when she's home. Over there is your sitting-room. Are you much tired or cold?"

Mrs. Merrie was a Jay herself, as capable of enjoying a bit of delicate humor as the rest of them. So this was the solving of the problem, the vacation which was to cost nothing! She turned away her face after the first laugh, that they might not witness the passing of the swift storm which shocked through the gentle habit of patience.

"No, I am neither cold nor tired," she said, after that pause. "I am sure I shall like my boarding house if you think—if you truly believe—my board is paid—"

"You advance," four voices chorused. "You have been saving up and paying for 20 years!" Jack whispered, tenderly, looking into her eyes. "Oh, we feel—we understand—that you have always been to us!"

Here Jerry pushed determinedly to the front. "I am to attend you, ma'am," she said. "Your board bill includes service. If the young ladies and the big male-Jay will please to

tempting, secretive odors unveiled themselves. King Gobbler had yielded to the inevitable, and more lovingly death than in life, adorned the center of a generous feast. "A regular blow-out," as Jesse expressed it, and there were no failures this time. The energy and talent of the whole family of Jays (minus its head) went to the making of a success so brilliant as to mark an epoch. "Just see what you-all can do!" Mrs. Merrie said over and over, her eyes bright with pride. "Why, I can't hold a candle to such cookin' as this!"

But the day was to crown itself with greener laurels. Each year since their infancy she had planned surprises for them; now had come the hour to reverse the story. When the lamps were lit they took her into the dining-room, where a handsome tree gleamed with light and color. The fact that there were more candles, tinzel paper and popcorn balls than presents did not detract from its beauty. Behind it on the wall was the legend: "Mother's Christmas," wrought in evergreen. Mother sat down in the big new rocker, cushioned with one of Jerry's conscience-stricken crazy quilts, and yielded to tears.

"Mother," Jack said, tenderly, kneeling beside her, "your selfishness was unintentional; we didn't know we were driving you to death. In our hurry to get an education we—forgot. You know my poor little pay as country school-teacher barely dresses us, but I can see my way plain to hire help for you while we are at school. You believe we love you, don't you, mother?"

"Yes," she answered, huskily. "Yes, yes! Whoever doubted it? And I—oh, what does anything matter, so we love each other?"

So this sweet Christmas passed into memory, and shone there, a rainbow promise that the food should no more engulf one mother's soul.—M. Howard Sheppard, in Ladies' World, New York.

ORIGIN OF SANTA CLAUS.

Why He Is Represented as an Old Man—Name Is the Dutch for St. Nicholas.

Santa Claus is of German origin. This is true if only because that is the Dutch name for St. Nicholas. That he is an old man is because in the ancient pagan feasts in celebration of the decay of the old year and the birth of the new an old man played the principal part. Among the Greeks and Romans it was Saturn, the father of all the gods, and among the Germans it was Thor, who was long-bearded and white-haired. The tradition of hoary age as appropriate for representation of the dying year was too strong to be driven away by the new figure of the Christ child, which was a feature of the early church observances. That the saint is St. Nicholas is due to the fact that that venerable personage's feast day was celebrated at about that period. St. Nicholas was a bishop of Myra, who flourished early in the fourth century. He is the patron saint of children and schoolboys, and hence it was natural that he should be a part of a celebration when the children received gifts and when they were allowed to be "heard as well as seen."

The practice of making presents on that day undoubtedly owes its origin to the general idea to carry into practice the Biblical mandate: "Peace on earth; good will to men." At first the great lords made presents to their retainers, and the season was marked by universal charity. By degrees the practice of Christmas giving spread until now everybody gives their friends presents.—N. Y. Mail and Express.

BEST HE COULD PROMISE.

"Papa," said Benny Bloombumper, "I want a big bass drum for Christmas."

"I'm afraid you can't have that," replied Mr. Bloombumper, "but you may have a big turkey drumstick."—Detroit Tribune.

Every next morning tantalizing little odors began to sneak into the apartments of the new boarder. Now she was sure it was turkey, now it seemed to be mince pie and hot cake. Then she remembered it was Christmas eve, and rolled up her knittin' decisively.

"The dear girls!" she thought. "They'll burn up and spoil everything they undertake! They'll not be sorry to have mammy back in the kitchen!"

But she had reckoned without her host. The door between her and the kitchen was locked, and when she attempted the dining-room entry Jack stopped her dead-end at the threshold. "I beg your pardon," she said, with polite severity. "You rented the parlor and bedroom only, I think. In-

deed we don't mean any incivility, but we just can't have our boarders cluttering up the kitchen on busy days, and will take it as a favor if you'll go back to your own quarters and get ready for a little outing. You haven't seen your old room, Mary Ann Griggs, since she moved away, have you? Jerry wants to drive you down there in the cart to spend the day."

Mrs. Merrie's eyes lighted with pleasure. "Well, really," she admitted, "if you won't let me help you—all I should like to see Mary Ann—powerful well I really should enjoy to go!"

Jerry brought her back in the early twilight and hustled her off to bed, and again sleep brought its healing.

Christmas morning came in with soft unsanded feet. All the earth was wrapped in the whiteness of snow. The Christ-child was born anew, and the great Mother, tenderly, in the hours of darkness, had spread her softest covertlet about His feet.

Four bright-eyed males, with Jesse below and the big male-Jay above, peeped in, and the simultaneous shout of "Christmas Gift!" brought Mrs. Merrie up from among her blankets.

"Well, I never!" she ejaculated. "I reckon this is the first Christmas you-all ever caught ma a-nappin'! I ain't got no Christmas for you neither—think of that!"

"Never mind," Jesse soothed. "We've got"—but Joe had him by the shoulders, and shook his mouth shut. There would have been instant war then, but—well, Jesse knew what he knew, and the balance of power remained unmistakably with the girls.

The dining-room door remained obstinately locked all day. Breakfast was eaten in the snug little kitchen, dinner served in state in the parlor. There were no guests at all save old Granny Woods, a half blind pauper, who always presented herself on recognized holidays, and was served with the best.

During the progress of the meal the tempting, secretive odors unveiled themselves. King Gobbler had yielded to the inevitable, and more lovingly death than in life, adorned the center of a generous feast. "A regular blow-out," as Jesse expressed it, and there were no failures this time. The energy and talent of the whole family of Jays (minus its head) went to the making of a success so brilliant as to mark an epoch. "Just see what you-all can do!" Mrs. Merrie said over and over, her eyes bright with pride. "Why, I can't hold a candle to such cookin' as this!"

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TOUR OF ALL MEXICO

In Pullman first-class Pullman Drawing Room, Library, Observation and Dining Cars—All Vested—with the celebrated Open Top Car "Chililiti" for Observation in the Mountains and Canons and Dining Car in the Tropics.

A delightful trip of 38 days with Three Circle Tours in the Tropics of the South of Mexico and a Visit to the Ruined Cities. All exclusive features of these itineraries of leisurely travel and long stops—The Special Train starts Tuesday, January 22, from Chicago.

Special Pullman Cars leave Chicago Thursday, January 17, and Thursday, February 1, at 8:30 a. m., connecting with the splendid new steamships Ponce and San Juan sailing from New York the second day following. Individual tickets sold for other sailing dates, alternate Saturdays.

Tickets include All Expenses Everywhere. These select limited parties will be under the special escort and management of The American Tourist Association. Reau Campbell, General Manager, 1423 Marquette Building, Chicago.

Itineraries, Maps and Tickets can be had on application to Agents of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R'y.

TRADE.

An interesting textile exposition is to be held in Atlanta, Ga., in 1902.

The German pencil trade is suffering severely from the competition of American lead pencil makers.

For cotton seed in its natural state, the export demand, though unimportant, has shown a steady decrease during the past six years.

We have surpassed France in the production of articles needed by the outside world as well as those required by our own people.

During the last century the balance of trade has been on the side of the United States with greater frequency than in any other country.

The principal countries which show an excess of exports over imports are Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chili, Australasia, India, Egypt, Spain, Austria, Hungary and Russia.

The imports of this republic in 1800 were nearly two-thirds as much as those of Great Britain, while at the end of the century they are less than one-third. At the same time our exports have increased three times as rapidly as those of Great Britain.

There is a popular impression that the French surpass all others in supplying their own necessities and furnishing their own luxuries, but figures show that their dependence upon foreign nations has been increasing with the years, and that the balance of trade is now largely against them.

THE AGES OF SAGES.

Hobbes wrote his "Human Intellect" at 62.

La Rochefoucauld, at 52, published his "Reflections."

Seneca, between 50 and 60, wrote his "Consolations."

Malthus published his great work on "Population" at 22.

Aristotle, after long thought, began his great series at 50.

Diderot began the "Encyclopedia" at 38 and finished it at 56.

Hegel, before 30, had laid out the outlines of his system of philosophy.

Jacobi, the "German Plato," wrote his best works between 40 and 50.

At 42 Kant began and at 52 he completed his great work, "Critique of Pure Reason."

Hume began "Human Nature" at 23, and, after seven years of labor, completed it at 30.

Plato, between 20 and 40, was with Socrates, and taught philosophy between 40 and 80 or 80.

Shafesbury at 22 entered the house of commons and exhibited great energy; at 38, published his work on "Tribute and Merit," and at 38 the "Monarchist."

Condillac at 12 years, on account of his feeble health, could not read; at 31, published his "Origin of Human Knowledge;" at 39 his "Sensation." His later works were of less account.

FIGURES.

There are now 68,403 post offices in the United States. Of these 2,661 were added last year.

The steamboat inspection service of this country has 2,533 steamers and 15,000 boilers under its charge.

Estimates of the largest wine makers in California indicate that the wine production of the state this year will reach between 13,500,000 and 18,000,000 gallons of dry wine and 7,000,000 gallons of sweet wine.

GOVERNOR OF OREGON Uses Pe-ru-na in His Family For Colds and Grip.

The Governor of Oregon is an ardent admirer of Pe-ru-na. He keeps it continually in the house. In a recent letter to Dr. Hartman he says:

STATE OF OREGON, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, SALEM, May 9, 1898.

The Pe-ru-na Medicine Co., Columbus, O.: Dear Sirs:—I have had occasion to use your Pe-ru-na medicine in